

Family characteristics of 15- to 18-year-olds

The family environment in which a child lives affects many aspects of that child's life, including school performance. For example, research has shown that family characteristics, such as parents' educational attainment, number of siblings, family income, and mother's employment status, are related to student achievement. Data on family characteristics may help policymakers and educators apply resources more efficiently and develop programs designed to increase learning.

- The educational attainment of parents of 15- to 18-year-olds increased substantially between 1972 and 1997. The percentage whose mothers attained a high school diploma, GED, or higher increased from 62 to 83 percent, while the percentage whose fathers attained a high school diploma, GED, or higher rose from 59 to 84 percent (see supplemental table 44-1).
- The employment rate of mothers of 15- to 18-year-olds increased between 1972 and 1997, rising from 49 percent in 1972 to 73 percent in 1997. The employment rate of fathers remained relatively constant between 1977 and 1997, although it was little higher in 1972 than it was in 1997.
- Despite the increase in mothers' employment rate, median family income (in 1997 constant dollars) remained relatively stable between 1972 and 1997 (see supplemental table 44-1).
- The percentage of 15- to 18-year-olds who lived with only their mother increased from 14 to 24 percent between 1972 and 1997, while the percentage who lived with two parents decreased from 84 to 71 percent.
- In 1997, 15- to 18-year-olds had fewer siblings than their peers in 1972. Sixty percent of 15- to 18-year-olds had two or more siblings in 1972, compared to 37 percent in 1997.

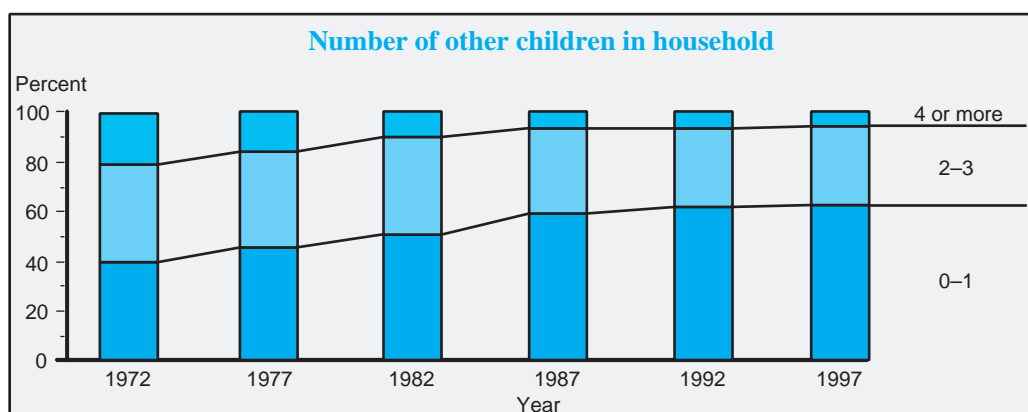
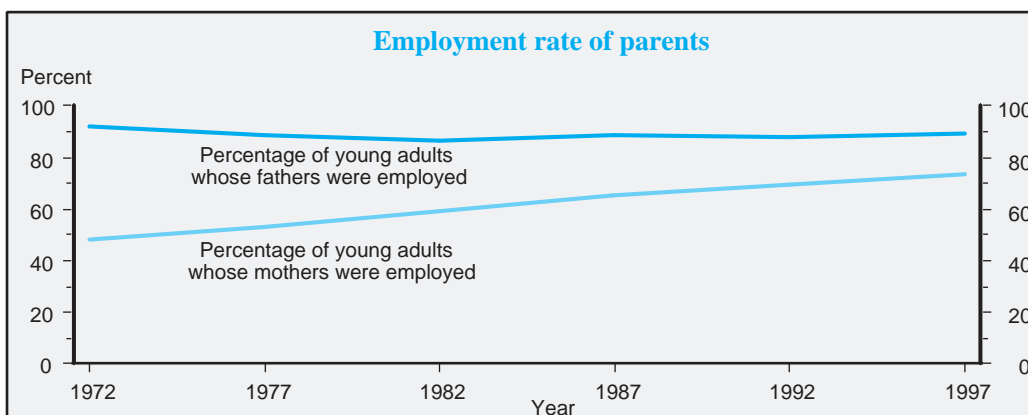
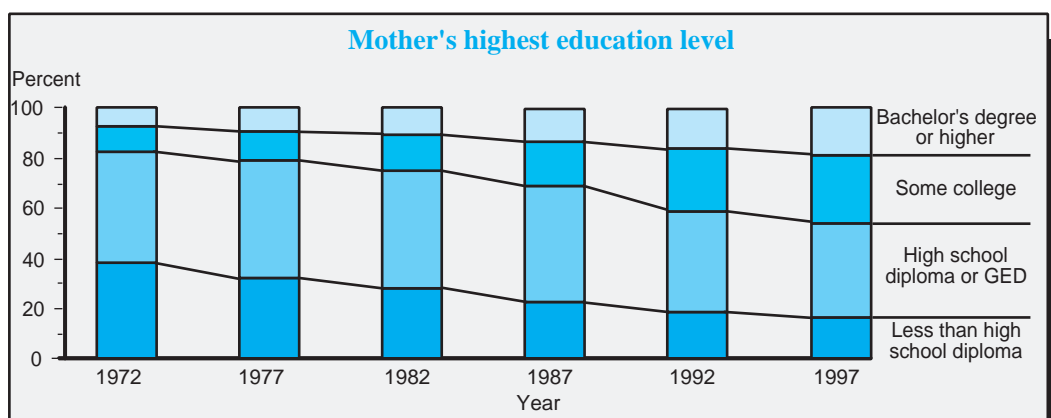
Family characteristics of 15- to 18-year-olds: 1972-97

Selected family characteristics	1972	1977	1982	1987	1992	1997
Mother's highest education level						
Less than high school diploma	38.4	32.5	28.1	22.6	18.7	17.0
High school diploma or GED	44.5	46.5	47.0	46.6	40.2	37.1
Some college	10.0	11.9	14.4	17.8	25.3	26.9
Bachelor's degree or higher	7.1	9.1	10.6	12.9	15.7	19.1
Percentage of young adults						
whose mothers were employed	48.6	53.0	59.0	65.3	69.4	73.4
Percentage of young adults						
whose fathers were employed	91.8	88.6	86.7	88.7	88.2	89.3
Family type						
Two-parent household	84.3	80.1	75.7	73.6	72.5	71.2
Father as head of household	2.0	2.6	2.9	3.6	3.9	5.0
Mother as head of household	13.7	17.3	21.4	22.8	23.6	23.8
Number of other children in household						
0-1	39.8	45.6	50.9	59.8	61.9	62.6
2-3	39.4	38.6	39.1	34.1	32.1	31.9
4 or more	20.8	15.9	10.0	6.1	6.1	5.5

NOTE: The Current Population Survey (CPS) questions used to obtain educational attainment were changed in 1992. See the supplemental note to *Indicator 22* for further discussion. Information on parents' educational attainment, employment status, or age of mother at child's birth is available only for those parents who live in the same household with their child. See the supplemental note to this indicator for further discussion on how the data were calculated. Emancipated minors were not included in this analysis. Details may not add to 100.0 due to rounding.

SOURCE: U.S. Department of Commerce, Bureau of the Census, March Current Population Surveys.

Family characteristics of 15- to 18-year-olds: 1972–97



NOTE: The Current Population Survey (CPS) questions used to obtain educational attainment were changed in 1992. See the supplemental note to *Indicator 22* for further discussion. Information on parents' educational attainment, employment status, or age of mother at child's birth is available only for those parents who live in the same household

with their child. See the supplemental note to this indicator for further discussion on how the data were calculated. Emancipated minors were not included in this analysis.

SOURCE: U.S. Department of Commerce, Bureau of the Census, March Current Population Surveys.

Table 44-1 Family characteristics of 15- to 18-year-olds: 1972-97

Selected family characteristics	1972	1977	1982	1987	1992	1997
Race/ethnicity of young adults						
White	81.9	80.0	76.7	73.9	71.0	68.5
Black	12.2	13.0	14.0	14.2	14.2	14.3
Hispanic	4.9	5.4	7.0	8.5	10.7	12.6
Other	1.1	1.6	2.3	3.3	4.1	4.6
Mother's highest education level						
Less than high school diploma	38.4	32.5	28.1	22.6	18.7	17.0
High school diploma or GED	44.5	46.5	47.0	46.6	40.2	37.1
Some college	10.0	11.9	14.4	17.8	25.3	26.9
Bachelor's degree or higher	7.1	9.1	10.6	12.9	15.7	19.1
Father's highest education level						
Less than high school diploma	41.0	33.2	28.4	21.4	16.5	16.1
High school diploma or GED	33.5	35.5	36.0	37.2	34.5	31.9
Some college	10.6	12.9	15.0	16.8	23.6	26.1
Bachelor's degree or higher	15.0	18.4	20.6	24.6	25.5	25.9
Mother's employment status						
Employed	48.6	53.0	59.0	65.3	69.4	73.4
Unemployed, looking for work	2.2	3.7	4.9	3.8	4.5	3.2
Not in labor force	49.3	43.3	36.2	30.8	26.1	23.4
Father's employment status						
Employed	91.8	88.6	86.7	88.7	88.2	89.3
Unemployed, looking for work	2.5	3.9	5.3	4.4	5.0	3.1
Not in labor force	5.7	7.5	8.0	7.0	6.8	7.5
Family type						
Two-parent household	84.3	80.1	75.7	73.6	72.5	71.2
Father as head of household	2.0	2.6	2.9	3.6	3.9	5.0
Mother as head of household	13.7	17.3	21.4	22.8	23.6	23.8
Number of other children in household						
0-1	39.8	45.6	50.9	59.8	61.9	62.6
2-3	39.4	38.6	39.1	34.1	32.1	31.9
4 or more	20.8	15.9	10.0	6.1	6.1	5.5
Age of mother at child's birth						
Under 20	9.2	12.0	12.8	13.8	14.5	11.1
20-24	29.3	31.5	32.8	34.3	31.9	30.9
25-29	29.1	26.1	27.0	28.2	32.9	33.1
30 or older	32.4	30.4	27.4	23.7	20.8	24.9
Median family income (in 1997 constant dollars)	\$47,746	\$48,214	\$44,502	\$47,219	\$45,670	\$47,420

NOTE: The Current Population Survey (CPS) questions used to obtain educational attainment were changed in 1992. See the supplemental note to *Indicator 22* for further discussion. Information on parents' educational attainment, employment status, or age of mother at child's birth is available only for those parents who live in the same household with their child. See the supplemental note to this indicator for further

discussion on how the data were calculated. Details may not add to 100.0 due to rounding.

SOURCE: U.S. Department of Commerce, Bureau of the Census, March Current Population Surveys.

Table 44-2 Family characteristics of white 15- to 18-year-olds: 1972–97

Selected family characteristics	1972	1977	1982	1987	1992	1997
Mother's highest education level						
Less than high school diploma	32.3	26.3	20.6	15.7	11.0	8.3
High school diploma or GED	48.9	50.5	51.6	49.7	43.2	39.3
Some college	10.8	13.1	15.7	20.0	28.1	29.6
Bachelor's degree or higher	8.0	10.0	12.0	14.5	17.8	22.8
Father's highest education level						
Less than high school diploma	35.7	28.4	22.9	16.4	11.2	9.7
High school diploma or GED	36.2	37.6	38.3	38.9	35.9	32.5
Some college	11.4	13.5	15.8	17.5	25.1	28.5
Bachelor's degree or higher	16.7	20.4	23.0	27.2	27.9	29.4
Mother's employment status						
Employed	49.1	53.8	60.8	67.5	73.4	77.5
Unemployed, looking for work	2.1	3.3	4.0	3.3	3.7	2.6
Not in labor force	48.8	42.8	35.2	29.2	22.9	19.9
Father's employment status						
Employed	92.6	90.3	88.4	90.5	90.0	91.0
Unemployed, looking for work	2.3	3.6	5.1	3.5	4.3	2.3
Not in labor force	5.0	6.1	6.5	6.0	5.7	6.6
Family type						
Two-parent household	88.1	84.8	81.0	79.4	79.4	78.1
Father as head of household	1.8	2.5	2.9	3.6	3.9	5.3
Mother as head of household	10.1	12.6	16.1	16.9	16.7	16.5
Number of siblings in family						
0–1	43.1	46.8	54.9	63.8	66.1	66.8
2–3	40.0	39.4	37.9	32.1	29.8	29.3
4 or more	16.9	13.9	7.3	4.1	4.2	3.9
Age of mother at child's birth						
Under 20	8.0	10.3	10.6	10.9	12.4	8.3
20–24	29.0	32.1	33.4	35.3	30.8	30.3
25–29	29.7	26.5	28.5	30.5	36.0	35.8
30 or older	33.3	31.1	27.5	23.3	20.8	25.6
Median family income (in 1997 constant dollars)	\$51,599	\$52,706	\$49,944	\$53,326	\$52,333	\$55,364

NOTE: The Current Population Survey (CPS) questions used to obtain educational attainment were changed in 1992. See the supplemental note to *Indicator 22* for further discussion. Information on parents' educational attainment, employment status, or age of mother at child's birth is available only for those parents who live in the same household with their child. See the supplemental note to this indicator for further

discussion on how the data were calculated. Details may not add to 100.0 due to rounding.

SOURCE: U.S. Department of Commerce, Bureau of the Census, March Current Population Surveys.

Table 44-3 Family characteristics of black 15- to 18-year-olds: 1972-97

Selected family characteristics	1972	1977	1982	1987	1992	1997
Mother's highest education level						
Less than high school diploma	64.4	55.2	46.5	35.3	26.4	22.2
High school diploma or GED	26.4	31.9	35.7	44.3	40.4	39.9
Some college	6.0	7.0	12.0	13.5	23.0	28.2
Bachelor's degree or higher	3.2	5.9	5.8	6.9	10.2	9.7
Father's highest education level						
Less than high school diploma	73.8	60.2	49.9	34.6	20.7	20.9
High school diploma or GED	17.3	26.6	30.2	39.7	38.9	44.7
Some college	6.0	9.0	13.2	15.4	24.5	22.8
Bachelor's degree or higher	2.9	4.1	6.8	10.3	16.0	11.6
Mother's employment status						
Employed	50.7	52.0	56.9	62.9	63.0	69.2
Unemployed, looking for work	3.0	5.9	8.8	5.8	6.5	4.7
Not in labor force	46.3	42.2	34.4	31.3	30.5	26.1
Father's employment status						
Employed	85.4	79.3	75.9	80.9	82.8	83.9
Unemployed, looking for work	4.0	3.9	6.2	7.2	6.2	5.0
Not in labor force	10.6	16.8	17.9	11.9	10.9	11.1
Family type						
Two-parent household	62.1	52.4	48.7	44.7	42.5	39.7
Father as head of household	3.1	3.1	2.3	2.8	3.6	4.7
Mother as head of household	34.8	44.5	49.0	52.4	53.8	55.6
Number of siblings in family						
0-1	25.6	42.4	39.8	51.8	55.6	56.6
2-3	35.0	33.0	43.4	37.2	36.6	35.1
4 or more	39.4	24.6	16.9	11.0	7.8	8.3
Age of mother at child's birth						
Under 20	16.6	22.6	23.5	27.0	24.2	22.2
20-24	30.0	28.4	32.2	32.5	35.4	34.2
25-29	24.2	22.9	19.8	19.1	23.1	25.4
30 or older	29.1	26.0	24.4	21.5	17.3	18.3
Median family income (in 1997 constant dollars)	\$28,927	\$28,415	\$25,836	\$26,835	\$27,473	\$29,505

NOTE: The Current Population Survey (CPS) questions used to obtain educational attainment were changed in 1992. See the supplemental note to *Indicator 22* for further discussion. Information on parents' educational attainment, employment status, or age of mother at child's birth is available only for those parents who live in the same household with their child. See the supplemental note to this indicator for further

discussion on how the data were calculated. Details may not add to 100.0 due to rounding.

SOURCE: U.S. Department of Commerce, Bureau of the Census, March Current Population Surveys.

Table 44-4 Family characteristics of Hispanic 15- to 18-year-olds: 1972–97

Selected family characteristics	1972	1977	1982	1987	1992	1997
Mother's highest education level						
Less than high school diploma	76.5	68.9	68.0	58.8	58.9	54.6
High school diploma or GED	15.8	23.7	23.9	29.2	24.0	24.6
Some college	5.7	4.9	6.0	8.1	12.9	14.3
Bachelor's degree or higher	2.0	2.5	2.1	4.0	4.2	6.5
Father's highest education level						
Less than high school diploma	76.0	63.7	64.6	57.8	54.2	53.7
High school diploma or GED	14.0	19.3	20.8	22.7	22.9	20.8
Some college	5.6	8.9	8.6	11.6	14.0	16.2
Bachelor's degree or higher	4.4	8.1	6.1	8.0	8.8	9.3
Mother's employment status						
Employed	31.5	43.3	41.8	48.2	51.6	56.0
Unemployed, looking for work	2.6	4.5	6.6	5.4	7.4	4.8
Not in labor force	65.9	52.2	51.6	46.4	41.0	39.1
Father's employment status						
Employed	89.5	79.0	83.3	80.6	81.9	84.8
Unemployed, looking for work	3.2	8.2	6.4	8.7	9.1	5.9
Not in labor force	7.3	12.7	10.2	10.7	9.0	9.3
Family type						
Two-parent household	76.7	76.1	71.4	68.5	64.1	67.1
Father as head of household	1.9	1.8	2.2	3.7	4.1	4.2
Mother as head of household	21.4	22.1	26.3	27.8	31.8	28.7
Number of siblings in family						
0–1	23.5	40.0	35.4	42.9	42.7	47.2
2–3	39.4	39.0	40.0	43.8	42.0	43.1
4 or more	37.1	21.0	24.5	13.4	15.3	9.7
Age of mother at child's birth						
Under 20	12.1	13.4	17.0	17.9	18.2	16.2
20–24	33.4	30.1	30.2	32.8	33.7	33.3
25–29	27.8	27.7	24.8	24.2	26.1	27.7
30 or older	26.7	28.7	28.0	25.2	22.0	22.8
Median family income (in 1997 constant dollars)	\$32,351	\$33,535	\$29,981	\$28,611	\$28,617	\$28,880

NOTE: The Current Population Survey (CPS) questions used to obtain educational attainment were changed in 1992. See the supplemental note to *Indicator 22* for further discussion. Information on parents' educational attainment, employment status, or age of mother at child's birth is available only for those parents who live in the same household with their child. See the supplemental note to this indicator for further

discussion on how the data were calculated. Details may not add to 100.0 due to rounding.

SOURCE: U.S. Department of Commerce, Bureau of the Census, March Current Population Surveys.

Note to Indicator 44: Family characteristics of 15- to 18-year-olds: 1972-97

Data on family characteristics of 15- to 18-year-olds were taken from the March Current Population Surveys (CPS). The March CPS is a hierarchical data file with three levels of information: household, family, and person. Some information used in this analysis, such as family income or family type, was obtained from family level and then retained/passed on to the person level. Information about parents were obtained by linking parents' records with their children's records using common variables, such as household ID, parent ID, spouse ID, and person IDs at various steps. Before the merging process began, an extract file, which included information from both household and family levels, was created for each individual (at the person level). During the merge, three temporary data sets were created using the extract file: head of household, spouses of the head, and children in the household. Records for head of household were first linked to records of spouses of head of household to create one file of parents' records containing information for both parents. Then, the children's records were merged with the parent records using common codes between the files, such as household ID, parent ID, and person ID. This merging process allowed information such as parents' education level and parents' employment status to be linked to children's files.

Family type

Information on family type, which originated at the family level, was taken from the parents' records and was linked to the children's records. The original family type categories were "husband and wife family," "male head," and "female head." When the parent information was merged with the children's records, these categories changed to "both parents," "father as head of household," and "mother as head of household," so that family type was in reference to the children rather than the parents.

Age of mother at child's birth

For this analysis, the age of the mother at the time of her child's birth was computed by subtracting the child's age from his or her biological, adoptive, or foster mother's or female guardian's age.

Number of other children in household

Number of siblings in the family was calculated by adding the total number of children in each family, and subtracting one (for the child in reference) from the total.

Mother's or father's highest education level

A parent's highest education level was obtained by merging the information from the parent's records with their children's records. The percentage distribution of mother's and father's highest education level was calculated based only on children who live with their parents. For example, the percentage distribution for mother's highest education level was calculated based on children who live with "both parents" and who live with "mother only." For children who live with only their father, their mother's education level was unknown; therefore, those in this "unknown" group were excluded from this section of the analysis.

Employment status of parents

Information on the employment status of parents was computed similarly as those for the parents' highest education level.

SOURCE: U.S. Department of Commerce, Bureau of the Census, March Current Population Surveys, unpublished tabulations.

Standard Error Tables

Table S44 **Standard errors for the text table in *Indicator 44***

Selected family characteristics	1972	1977	1982	1987	1992	1997
Mother's highest education level	0.6	0.6	0.6	0.6	0.6	0.5
Less than high school diploma	0.6	0.6	0.6	0.7	0.7	0.7
High school diploma or GED	0.4	0.4	0.5	0.5	0.6	0.6
Some college	0.3	0.3	0.4	0.4	0.5	0.5
Bachelor's degree or higher						
Percentage of young adults						
whose mothers were employed	0.6	0.6	0.7	0.7	0.7	0.7
Percentage of young adults						
whose fathers were employed	0.4	0.4	0.5	0.5	0.6	0.5
Family type						
Two-parent household	0.6	0.6	0.7	0.8	0.9	0.9
Father as head of household	0.2	0.3	0.3	0.3	0.4	0.4
Mother as head of household	0.6	0.6	0.7	0.8	0.9	0.8
Number of other children in household						
0-1	0.8	0.8	0.9	0.9	1.0	0.9
2-3	0.8	0.8	0.9	0.8	0.9	0.9
4 or more	0.7	0.6	0.5	0.4	0.5	0.4

SOURCE: U.S. Department of Commerce, Bureau of the Census, March Current Population Surveys.